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# newsletter

Comparative Research Programme On Poverty

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## frontiers of poverty research

### THE CONSTRUCTED VULNERABILITY OF DOMESTIC WORKERS

In the past years, the links between poverty and vulnerability have been increasingly explored, and their mutually reinforcing relationships analysed. Vulnerability goes beyond the risk of poverty: many studies have shown how specific groups, such as women and migrants, display particular and reinforced vulnerability to labour exploitation, loss of employment, abuse and low wages, as well as violence and crime, diseases and death, etc.

Domestic employment is the first sector of employment for women worldwide, and represents hundreds of thousands of workers in the Mediterranean area only. The globalised structural dynamics of the domestic labour markets contribute to reinforce workers' vulnerability almost everywhere.

Domestic employment is on the rise, worldwide and particularly in Western Europe and in most Mediterranean countries. Studies stress a growing internationalisation of domestic labour markets, parallel to an increasing feminisation of migrations, and to the emergence of national specialisations (e.g. the Philippines, Sri Lanka). Domestic workers are increasingly migrants originating from developing countries, often illegal residents, who reach their country of destination by means of intermediaries or traffickers. Migration in unprotected conditions bears many vulnerability factors that affect migrant

women differently according to their country of origin and their country of destination. The large – and in some cases almost exclusive – penetration of migrant workers in domestic labour markets breeds labour relationships based on domination and exploitation, hard labour conditions and minimal wages, more and more often embodied in live-in arrangements.

These labour conditions and relationships amplify factors of vulnerability linked to the sheer migratory fact, to the point where the international dimension of the domestic labour market leads to the racialisation, or the ethnicisation, of this occupation in most countries of employment (Andall 2000, Anderson 2000, Glenn 1992). Migration and labour market regulations combine with attitudes and *preferences* to channel racial-ethnic women into domestic service, maintain them at the lowest stages of society and labour market, and block their entry into other fields and strategies of mobility (Oso Casas 2001, Chaib 2003). Structural conditions for access to host countries thus contribute to secure abundant and cheap domestic labour supplies and affect the positions of migrant domestic workers on the labour markets and the nature of their relationship with their employer.

Paid domestic labour is seldom classified as a *real* profession and a proper branch of employment, but rather considered a very low skill activity, deserving little

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consideration, and reserved to lower status women and dominated social groups. Live-in arrangements are components of domestic labour affordability, but they also reinforce workers' vulnerability. They expose them to a highly personalised relationship with their employer. Since they imply a deregulation of working time, they allow a more intense exploitation of labour, as well as intensified control, to the point of seclusion. They make abuse easier, while retrenching the labour relationship from the legalised sphere, into the private locus of the household. They allow a very loose count of worked hours, which are paid at a cost below any kind of legislation. These conditions are tailored for vulnerable migrants who enter a multifold situation of domination, implying strong dependency links.

Because of this peculiarity, or rather in spite of it, domestic labour is either excluded from the scope of basic labour standards applicable to other categories of workers, or covered by specific laws granting it a lower protection (Ramirez-Machado 2003). In addition to this *legal stigmatisation*, which leads to lower protection, bypassing the law and evading social contributions is everywhere quite common. Migrants find themselves in a position where they should supply cheap work without demanding rights, guarantees or social security. In a context of global markets' liberalisation and welfare state retrenchment, socially constructed informality, lack of protection and vulnerability are necessary components to the very lucrative domestic

labour business. They are needed to control and use a precious labour force outsourced from further and further away.

The case of domestic workers is relevant to poverty and vulnerability research in various perspectives: it stresses the weight of cumulated factors of personal vulnerability – e.g. migration, gender, low professionalisation... – in specific circumstances, and pleads for a detailed research of the relationship between work and poverty/vulnerability in various contexts. It also underlines the relevance of economic, political and legal structures in producing and reproducing poverty and vulnerability. It questions interpretations in terms of culture – of poverty, submissivity, low self-esteem... – and points to the weight of interactions in producing relationships that are components to both poverty and vulnerability. Finally, it pleads for the need to promote and implement a wide understanding of social protection, not limited to risk management, but anchored in the defense of workers', women's, minorities' and migrants' rights.

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### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS TO CROP SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE 2007-2008

The General Assembly of the International Social Science Council (ISSC) appoints the CROP Scientific Committee to advise the Programme. The Scientific Committee for 2007-2008 will be appointed by the XXVIth ISSC General Assembly in Alexandria, Egypt, November 6-13, 2006.

The members of the Scientific Committee are elected among outstanding poverty researchers worldwide, and chosen to represent different geographical regions and scientific disciplines. A fair representation of women is being sought. The role of the Scientific Committee is to give guidance to the development of CROP, to serve on the Programme Committees for different activities and to act as advocate for CROP in contact with the international poverty research community, organisations, financing agencies and mass media.

Suggestions for candidates for the new Scientific Committee can be sent to the CROP Secretariat (E-mail: [crop@uib.no](mailto:crop@uib.no)) before September 15th.

### NEW BOOK IN CROP INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN POVERTY RESEARCH SERIES:

#### International Poverty Law - An International Perspective

Editor of the book is Prof. **Lucy Williams** (Northeastern University School of Law, USA).

While law and development discourse has dealt with international poverty, advocates of poverty reduction usually operate within a nation-state context. This book provides a new framework for the future theoretical development of international poverty law. It explores specific human rights initiatives that address particular aspects of poverty, including human rights conventions, measures to counter the tendency of intellectual property law to undermine food security, the right to food as framed in UN development documents, and the startlingly important development in South Africa of an alternative vision of constitutional law. The contributors position international poverty law as a legitimate field for multidisciplinary research and dialogue, and open up new arenas for international poverty law to contribute to addressing poverty reduction.

For ordering information contact:

**Zed Books**, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, UK,

Tel: +44-(0)207-837-4014, Fax: +44-(0)207-833-3960, Web: <http://www.zedbooks.co.uk>

## editorial

Dominique Babini<sup>1</sup> & Fabiana Wertheim<sup>2</sup>

### POVERTY RESEARCH PROJECTS, RESEARCHERS AND RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

CLACSO (Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales/Latin American Council of Social Sciences) is a 30 years old academic network gathering 173 social science research and teaching institutions in 21 countries of Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean. Each of these institutions has ongoing research related to poverty issues and results are published in journals, books, working documents and conference papers which are not readily available in their printed format because of high costs of postage, reduced number of volumes printed and lack of inter-library loan among cities and countries.

In 1998 CLACSO decided to start with promotion and training activities to encourage editors of its research member institutes to provide Internet access to the electronic version of the printed publications. At the same time CLACSO started a virtual library to provide integrated access to these distributed collections of electronic documents available in the websites of each member institute. Funds from NORAD to the CLACSO/CROP programme on poverty research in Latin America and the Caribbean has provided support to input information on poverty issues in this open access virtual library.

The english version of the digital library can be found at:

[http://www.clacso.org.ar/biblioteca/ingles/document\\_view](http://www.clacso.org.ar/biblioteca/ingles/document_view)

Here users can search for research projects, specialists, bibliographic references and full-text publications from Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean in the following resources (note as spanish and portuguese are the working languages in this open access service, searches need to be performed in these languages):

- A *Reading Room* with more than 5,300 full-text social science publications in Spanish and Portuguese (a search in "pobreza" (poverty in spanish and portuguese) gave as result 471 full-text publications: books, journal articles, working documents, conference papers)
- A *Bibliographic Database* (407 bibliographic references on poverty issues)
- *Research Database* (158 descriptions of research on poverty)
- *Specialists* (123 researchers on poverty issues)

The digital library is based on the Open Source software Greenstone (developed by the University of Waikato in New Zealand) which has been implemented within CLACSO to provide a cooperative network environment that enables authors and editors from the member institutes to input their content online and have their own collection within this cooperative network of digital libraries. Usage shows more than 3,000 visitors a day and monthly statistics are available in the portal to follow the number of down-loads for each article, book and paper.

1) Coordinator of CLACSO's Virtual Libraries Network, E-mail: [dbabini@campus.clacso.edu.ar](mailto:dbabini@campus.clacso.edu.ar)

2) CLACSO/CROP Programme on Poverty Research in Latin America and the Caribbean, E-mail: [clacso-crop@clacso.edu.ar](mailto:clacso-crop@clacso.edu.ar)

### EXTENSION OF CLACSO- CROP PROGRAMME

The programme has been funded by The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) 2002-2005. NORAD has not only guaranteed further support of the well-functioning partnership in the period 2006-2008, but has increased the financial support to include also yearly courses on the methodology of poverty research for younger scholars.

### COURSE IN POVERTY RE- SEARCH IN COSTA RICA

CLACSO and CROP in cooperation with FLACSO organized a course in Costa Rica, February 13-17, on methodological approaches to poverty research, for young researchers in the social sciences in the countries of Central America.

A similar course will be organized in 2007.

### WORLD FORUM ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The 2nd World Forum on Human Rights will be held in Nantes, France, July 10-13. The main objective of the forum is to be a centre for dialogue in which actors from the field of human rights can participate. It will have special focus on the role of cities and local authorities in implementing rights more efficiently in their jurisdictions.

For more information visit: <http://www.forum-humanrights.org>

### THE POLITICS OF POVERTY PRODUCTION

Session organized by CROP and CLACSO at the International Forum on the Social Science-Policy Nexus, held by UNESCO/MOST and the Government of Argentina, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, February 22.

It is not common to speak of *production* of poverty since the wording suggests some kind of action to produce poverty. However, one way ahead in understanding the complexity of poverty formation may be to look closer at those 'actions' and the actors involved in the process.

The following papers were presented and discussed:

- *The Politics of Poverty Production*  
Else Øyen, CROP
- *Social Policy and Poverty Production in Latin America*  
Carlos Sojo, FLACSO, Costa Rica
- *Poverty Production in Africa*  
Adebayo Olukoshi, CODESRIA, Senegal
- *Perceptions of Urban Poverty and Social Exclusion. A Latin American Perspective*  
Alicia Ziccardi, UNAM, Mexico
- *The International and National Politics of Poverty Production in Asia*  
Santosh Mehrotra, UNDP, Thailand
- *Good Governance: A Strategy for Studies of Production and Reproduction of Poverty in Latin America*  
Carlos Barba, Univ. of Guadalajara, Mexico
- *The Politics of Poverty Production: Constructing Integrated Approaches*  
Alberto D. Cimadamore, CLACSO
- *Why Does Poverty Grow in Democratic Regimes?*  
Atilio Boron, CLACSO

### GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON MDGs

*Strengthening Mutual Accountability - Aid, Trade and Governance*, the third annual Global Monitoring Report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been published by the World Bank and the IMF. Mark Sunderberg is main author of the report.

With less than a decade to achieve the MDGs, the report underlines the urgency for both developing countries and the donor community to improve governance in order to be able to meet the desired results.



## NEWSLETTER JUBILEE

This is the 50th issue of the CROP Newsletter. The CROP Secretariat began publishing the newsletter back in 1994. Since the start we have shipped out about 75,000 copies of the newsletter to the subscription base consisting of poverty researchers and users of poverty research. We wish to thank all contributors for their valuable inputs to the newsletter over the years.

All back issues of the CROP Newsletter can be read on the CROP webpage at: <http://www.crop.org/publications/newsletters.cfm>

## NEW BOOKS IN POVERTY RESEARCH

*The Encyclopedia of World Poverty*, edited by Dr. Mehmet Odekon (Dept. of Economics, Skidmore College, USA), provides insight into the contemporary debate on poverty. The entries contributing to the book explore the problems of poverty in various regions of the world, and examine the difficulties associated with the definition and measurement of poverty, along with its causes and effects.

The volume *The Economics of Elementary Education in India - The Challenge of Public Finance, Private Provision and Household Costs*, edited by member of CROP's Scientific Committee Santosh Mehrotra, is based on data gathered from a comprehensive survey conducted on this issue in India.

For information on how to order these books contact Sage Publications: <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/>

## RURAL POVERTY PORTAL

The Rural Poverty Portal is a website where rural poor people, policy-makers, donors, research institutes, NGO's and other development partners can share information about eradicating rural poverty. The portal is a resource of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and can be found at: <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org>

Contributions to the portal on research, case studies, reports and strategies can be sent by E-mail to: [portal@ifad.org](mailto:portal@ifad.org)

## LIST OF CROP EVENTS 2006

### August

20-25: *New Frontiers of Poverty Research*. Panel organized by CLACSO and CROP at the XXIIth CLACSO General Assembly, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Papers by invitation only.

### September

13-15: *The Politics of Poverty Production, also a Matter of Human Rights and Ethics*. Panel organized by CROP at the Norwegian Association for Development Research (NFU) conference 2006: "Ethics, Human Rights and Development", Oslo, Norway.

## AWARD FOR INTER-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

The *Foundation Mattei Dogan and the International Social Science Council for Excellence in Interdisciplinary Research* Prize is awarded to a social scientist who in his/her research and writings, by crossing the disciplinary boundaries or by recombining different specialties has advanced the scientific knowledge in the social sciences. It can also be offered to a coherent team of scholars enjoying a high reputation in academic circles.

The prize will be awarded for the first time in November and thereafter every four years, at the General Assembly of the ISSC (see ISSC's webpage for further details: <http://www.unesco.org/ngo/issc>).

Contact the CROP Secretariat if you have suggestions for nominations to the prize within the field of inter-disciplinary poverty research.

## POVERTY AND CONSERVATION LEARNING GROUP

The group is an initiative, coordinated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), intended to address the growing divide between conservation and development practitioners and policy makers in how to link biodiversity conservation with poverty reduction.

The group's webpage can be found at <http://www.povertyandconservation.info>, it contains a database that can be searched for bibliographic references, case studies, initiatives and organisations operating in this field of research.

## CROP IN BRIEF

CROP is a world-wide network of researchers and experts on poverty. The aim of CROP is to establish an arena for interdisciplinary and comparative research on poverty in developed and developing countries. CROP organises regional workshops, symposia and international conferences, promotes joint research projects and publications, links poverty researchers and disseminates information about poverty research, on a non-profit basis.

The CROP webpage is found at <http://www.crop.org>. The site holds general information about CROP, news about past and ongoing activities, as well as the latest CROP newsletter.

CROP has developed a database on poverty researchers (CROPnet), and documentation of ongoing research. If you wish to have your name listed in CROPnet, visit the CROP webpage at <http://www.crop.org/cropnet/register.cfm> and complete the online questionnaire.

### SECRETARIAT STAFF:

**Else Øyen**, Scientific Director  
**Hans Egil Offerdal**, Latin American Co-ordinator  
**Inge Erling Tesdal**, Executive Officer

## CHANGES IN STAFFING AT CROP SECRETARIAT

CROP co-ordinator Kirsti Thesen Sælen has taken over a new position at UNIFOB, a non-profit research organisation affiliated with the University of Bergen, Norway.

CROP thanks Sælen for the very valuable work she has done at the CROP Secretariat and wishes her all the best in her new job.

For correspondence about CROP related matters please use the following contact information:

Tel: +47-5558-9744/Fax: +47-5558-9745  
 E-mail: [crop@uib.no](mailto:crop@uib.no)

## CROP ANNUAL REPORT 2005

The CROP Annual Report 2005 is now available. An overview of CROP's academic activities (workshops, publications, regional collaborations) and achievements in the past year are included.

The report can be downloaded from the CROP website at <http://www.crop.org>.